GETTING RELIGION - CHALLENGING RELIGIOUS ILLITERACY
IN A TIME OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

BIOGRAPHIES

DR MUSTAFA BAIG is a Research Fellow at Exeter University, on Professor Robert Gleave’s Islamic Reformulations: Belief, Violence, Governance ESRC GULF grant. He was previously Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Manchester where he also completed his PhD thesis. His research interests principally lie in the study of Islamic jurisprudence in non-Muslim contexts, investigating how Islamic jurists – who predominantly addressed Muslims living under Muslim rule – discussed the ‘more exceptional’ cases of Muslims living in non-Muslim lands, and the legal and theological implications involved. As well as examining the classical literature on Muslims in non-Muslim jurisdictions, he is also interested in following new modern/ist discourses on Muslims in minority contexts. A forthcoming project will be a monograph that examines the construction of traditional jurisprudential authority found in specific modern fatwa writing.

PROFESSOR GRACE DAVIE is the pre-eminent sociologist of religion of her generation, authoring many important works including the definitive Religion in Britain since 1945, of which a comprehensively revised edition will appear in February 2015. Based at Exeter University she was from 2002-06 the Director of the Centre for European Studies. She has worked closely with and visited a number of European Universities and Grandes Ecoles, notably the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. In 2000-01, she held the Kerstin Hesselgren Professorship at Uppsala University, where she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate. She is presently collaborating with the Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre, more specifically with the Linnaeus Centre of Excellence: The Impact of Religion - Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy.

BETSY HIEL has been the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review’s foreign correspondent since April 2000, based in Cairo. From 2011 till present time, she has covered the revolutions and their aftermath in Egypt, Libya and other countries around the Arab World. She has recently reported from Erbil on the flight of the Yazidis as part of her work on the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and its influence around the region. She also covered the Russian takeover of Crimea in Ukraine. Ms Hiel covered the rise of the Islamists in Egypt, including President Mohamed Morsi, who hails from the Muslim Brotherhood, and his overthrow. In 2013, she covered the burning of nearly 50 churches in Egypt. In 2008, she embedded with the 101st Airborne soldiers and covered the war in Afghanistan from combat outposts just a few miles from the Pakistani border. She covered the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and continued to report from there in 2003-2008. She has a Master’s degree in Arab Studies from Georgetown University, and has studied at the American University in Cairo. She is co-author of the book: The Islamic Revival since 1988: A Critical Survey and Annotated Bibliography, and was a contributor to the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World. She is proficient in written and spoken Arabic. A Pew Fellow in International Journalism in 1998, she has won many awards including the national 2000 Edward Weintal Award for Diplomatic Reporting from Georgetown University. In 2009, she won the Military Reporters and Editors top award for her reporting on Afghanistan. She won the prestigious national Wilbur award this year for her coverage of the persecution of the Christians in Egypt.

TOM HOLLAND is the presenter of BBC Radio 4’s Making History. An award-winning historian, his most recent book, In the Shadow of the Sword has received wide critical acclaim, and was the subject of a Channel 4 documentary, The Untold Story. It is set at the time of the collapse of Roman hegemony, and the emergence of Islam as a global force. He believes that the Middle East is showing signs of reverting to its ancient pre-Western imperial outlines, and that journalists need a longer view to report with any accuracy the evolving international scene. He is also the author of three other highly praised works of history. The first, Rubicon: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic, won the Hessell-Tiltman Prize for History and was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize. His book on the Graeco-Persian wars, Persian Fire: The First World Empire and the Battle for the West, won the Anglo-Hellenic League's Runciman Award in 2006. He served two years as the Chair of the Society of Authors and is currently on the committee of the Classical Association. His translation of Herodotus’ The
Histories is published by Penguin Classics. A passionate unionist, he recently organized the successful English ‘Let’s Stay Together’ Indyref campaign – via Twitter.

DR MARAT SHTERIN joined King’s College, University of London in 2006, after receiving a PhD in Sociology from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) where he also taught and did research. He earlier taught History at a Moscow School of Arts, becoming headmaster. The changes immediately before and after the fall of the Soviet Union reinforced his interest in the social scientific study of religion, which remains his abiding interest (alongside theatre and music). He is particularly interested in the origins and consequences of religious innovation across religious traditions in a variety of contexts, and his current focus is on religious minorities and religiously motivated ‘radicalisation’ in Russia and Western Europe, and on the new trends in Russian Christian Orthodoxy and Islam. He recently edited Dying for Faith: Religiously Motivated Violence in the Contemporary World with Madawi Al-Rasheed.

DR JENNY TAYLOR is a journalist and author and founding Director of London-based philanthro-media charity, Lapido Media, a pioneer of the religious literacy movement. She was indentured with Yorkshire Post Newspapers in Goole before joining the Evening Advertiser in Swindon where she had the first Race Relations brief in Westminster Press. Several media posts in missionary societies involved travel throughout the slums of Asia, the Middle East and parts of Africa. She championed the ending of the war in Northern Uganda initiating the Break the Silence Campaign for the Church Mission Society which succeeded in bolstering the indigenous church leaders to secure the expulsion of Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army – a story she wrote up for the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs. She reported for among others, the BBC, the Guardian and the Church Times from southern Sudan, Sierra Leone and Northern Nigeria, learning about the impact for vulnerable peoples of international media coverage. As Director of Lapido she has championed black churches against stereotyping over ritual child abuse; and run several high-profile events on media coverage of world affairs. She is co-author with Lamin Sanneh of Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in ‘Secular’ Britain – which led to the founding of the Christian Muslim Forum - and is author of A Wild Constraint: the Case for Chastity (Continuum). Her doctorate awarded in 2001 is a case study of desecularization and Islam, from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

PROFESSOR JOHN WOLFFE is a Global Uncertainties Leadership Fellow, funded by the Research Councils UK Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research. His substantive post is as Professor of Religious History at The Open University, where he was formerly Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Arts and Head of the Department of Religious Studies, and is currently a member of Council. He was President of the Ecclesiastical History Society in 2013-14. His many publications include The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860 (1991), God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945 (1994), The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney (2006) and (with Mark Hutchinson) A Short History of Global Evangelicalism (2012). He has recently edited two volumes of essays arising from his Global Uncertainties work, Protestant-Catholic Conflict from the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century (2013) and Irish Religious Conflict in Comparative Perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims (2014). He is passionately committed to bringing rigorous academic research about religion into effective dialogue with policy, practice and the media, and recently led projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to explore ways in which an enhanced understanding of history can assist the work of present-day religious groups in London. Together with Dr Gavin Moorhead he has co-authored the report that provides one of the starting points for this consultation.

CAROLINE WYATT is the BBC Religion Correspondent. Before that she was Defence Correspondent and BBC Moscow Correspondent. While in Russia, she covered the conflict in Chechnya, the war in Afghanistan, and was part of the BBC team embedded with British troops during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. She has also reported from the Middle East, covered the conflict in Kosovo in 1999 and has travelled extensively across western and eastern Europe as the BBC’s Berlin and Bonn Correspondent. She says ‘News broadcasting is the most fun you can have.’